

NEW AND SEASONABLE

Address to the Disciplinarians

OF

THE PEOPLE CALLED

QUAKERS,

RELATIVE TO

TITHES AND TAXES.

BY CATHOLICUS.

SECOND EDITION.

PRINTED IN 1798

NEW AND REVISIONABLE

Address to the Disposition

OF

THE TITHE CASE



TITHES AND TAXES

BY CATHOLICS

SECOND EDITION

PRINTED IN 1851

REMARKS.

SINCE the second Edition was printed, it has been suggested, that some few remarks, which admitted the force of the arguments respecting the Society, might have been inserted, and expressed the idea, that the author might be supposed to have written with an intention to excite opposition against the Taxes of the State. To obviate such an idea, he inserts it right to say, that a pamphlet, written with reference to the particular principles of a particular Society, is not for their purpose, and not to be published, could never be intended for public influence. The author also expressly disavows the least wish of inducing any among the Society of Friends to neglect the payment of national Taxes. On the contrary, whatever Taxes are levied by legislative authority, in peace or war, he holds, "that pious Christians must honestly pay," and for the general reason of submission expressly assigned. The necessary reasons, respecting the new Taxes of the present period, he has thought it necessary to discuss in connection with the objects, and with the views, which Friends, under the peculiarity of their testimony, entertain of wars and fighting:—and by a comparative statement against their conduct respecting the Claims, to show the more strongly the utter inappropriateness of that conduct. With regard to causes and consequences, as known affairs, well-meaning men will often be divided in opinion; but the general rule of submission to the Taxes of Government must bind, and more especially in times of national difficulty. From whatever circumstance of war or peace may arise.

Advertisement.

SINCE the Second Edition was printed off, it has been suggested, that some few readers, who admitted the force of the arguments respecting the Society-conduct with regard to Tithes, had expressed an idea, that the Author may be supposed to have written with an indirect design to excite opposition against the Taxes of the State. To obviate such an idea, he deems it right to reply, that a pamphlet, written with reference to the peculiar principles of a particular Society, solely for their perusal, and not to be published, could never be intended for public influence. The Author also wholly disavows the least wish of inducing any among the Society of Friends to scruple the payment of national Taxes. On the contrary, whatever Taxes are levied by legislative authority, in peace or war, he holds, "that peaceable Christians must peaceably pay," and for the general reason of submission expressly assigned. This necessary conduct, respecting the new Taxes of the present period, he has thought it right strongly to describe in connection with the objects, and with the views, which Friends, under the peculiarity of their testimony, entertain of wars and fightings:—and by a comparative statement against their conduct respecting Tithe Claims, to shew the more strongly the utter inconsistency of that conduct. With regard to causes and consequences, in human affairs, well-meaning men will often be divided in opinion; but the general rule of submission to the Taxes of Government must bind, and more especially in times of national difficulty, from whatever concurrence of causes brought on.

SEASONABLE ADDRESS.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

YOU are addressed, in the few following pages, by one who is no enemy to your Establishment, as a body distinct from all others in the general principles of your religious profession. The origin of your dissent from the national church, and sundry tenets and usages of the other sects in this country, is well known: and though the religious controversies in which your Society has been engaged, have not been uniformly conducted by the most exemplary Christian meekness, you have generally evinced a warm attachment to the Rights of Men, both civil and religious.— So far forth you have rendered a general service to your country, and the best interests of the Christian religion. But you must be conscious that, neither as a body of professors, nor as individuals, are you clear from the common lot of liability to err in judgment.

This liability, though to be admitted as a general *truth*, is not urged against you as a *reflection*. It is the common lot of humanity, and has existed among good men from the first ages of the world. It was exemplified in misconceptions, even of the immediate disciples of Jesus; and by differences of opinion, respecting some points of faith and practice, among the inspired Apostles: Innumerable varieties of opinion, on the same subjects, among well-meaning professors,

in all succeeding ages, may serve also to illustrate the fact, But to come still nearer to our purpose; the proof has been abundantly evident among yourselves, from the strong dissents of many of your own most valuable members, respecting the settlement and application of sundry prominent Rules of your Discipline, ever since you have been a legislative Body. You cannot but know, from your own observation, that the weak and superficial have been often numbered in your majorities; while wise and worthy men, whom you have been constrained to respect, have solemnly dissented in their judgment. The notion of infallibility, though sometimes entertained by the inconsiderate and incautious, has never been countenanced by your wisest brethren—and there is ever a striking propriety in calm deliberation and review.

You now, in common with all other classes of men, live in an age, strongly marked by free enquiry into the various rights of men and citizens;—an age, in which principles and practices, as they affect the rational happiness of society, are become subjects of close observation and remark.—And you will not be surprised to find, that, generally simple and unoffending as your system is, some of your peculiarities should be the subjects of renewed reflection. If, as a body, you possess that degree of candour, which I know to be possessed by many individuals among you, you will not be displeased to find a friendly observer, like myself, using the liberty of a little free and unprejudiced animadversion. If all your principles and society-practice are really sound and exemplary, as undoubtedly you suppose them, they are the more easily defensible by your most intelligent writers; but if, on the contrary, you are not clear of some *few* prominent

errors

errors and inconsistencies, (and very few am I disposed to impute) you cannot justly be offended if they shall be pointed out. And, perhaps, there never was a period, since you have been a people, when the consistent example of any one particular description of British citizens was more important to the best interests of the whole, than the present. It is a period seriously fruitful of events, and awfully portentous of difficulties and calamity!

The topics on which I would plainly touch, are chiefly those which, in some degree, affect in their consequences the national politics, and the advancement of an uniform Christian liberty. In doing this, I shall have occasion closely to advert to that part of your society-practice, which concerns the subject of *Tithes*; your conduct towards the legal claimants; and towards those of your own members, who dissent from the system of opposition to those demands, publicly avowed among you. Some collateral and consequent reflections may of course arise from the discussion; and, I trust, they will not be found unworthy of your consideration.

The high respect which I really entertain for the memory of your ancestors, does not, and I feel cannot, preclude my conviction, that the commencement of their "Testimony (as you term it) against Tithes," was *partially* and *inconsistently* formed.

The original institution of national priests, and the gradual allotment of tithes to support them, your ancestors deemed, and perhaps truly, an improper and unwarranted intrusion upon the simplicity of the Christian religion.— They recurred, as they had a natural and divine right to do,

to that venerable simplicity instituted among Christian believers, by the sacred Founder himself. They recurred to his authoritative superseding of the dispensation of Moses, respecting the legal priesthood, and the expensive, elementary, and typical rites of the Jewish church: They recurred to the new doctrines of spiritual worship,—to the divine precepts and example of the Holy Messenger of a new dispensation: They learned from sacred writ, that though He, the Holy Head of the Christian ministry, ate, drank, and was clothed, according to the necessary calls and decencies of human nature, he derived his supplies, under the providence of his Heavenly Father, from his own bodily labour, or the voluntary dispositions of his disciples! They recurred to the spirit of his eternal Gospel, as received, and in all things exemplified, by the Apostles, the ministers of his word, whom he appointed for that purpose, who received the lively oracles to give unto us; and who, while they fulfilled their course, and transmitted to future generations their laudable example, wrought with their own hands, lest they should make their Gospel chargeable.

All this your ancestors held in due reverence, and reasonably considered as obligatory upon them, who believed themselves called to a revival of the primitive spirit of the Christian churches, “after a long and dark night of apostasy;”—an apostasy which had been gradually produced by the intervention of human weakness and superstition; and completed, and long confirmed, by the abuses of temporal power, instigated by that *priestcraft*, which had deformed, and almost demonized, the Christian profession. They felt the spring of the Christian ministry to be a warm, disinterested love,—*the burning of the heart within them*,—previous

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to their speaking with their tongue: They felt also the weight of the Christian injunction,—“Freely ye have received, freely give.” On these solemn principles, they professed to commence their publick character in this country. Thus far they did well; and their fervent spirit of devotion towards God, that fervent love of the brethren, and that awakening exercise of an apostolic ministry, which they largely exemplified, were so many seals to the truth of their general mission.

In this exercise and work of faith, an amiable fraternity of men were speedily occupied; and, considering the adverse interests they had to encounter, the strong holds of religious corruption they had to shake, and which they *did* shake, it was not wonderful that those, whose credit was much affected by them, were soon alarmed, and malignantly active in their opposition. Such were many of the worldly priests, to whose craft the light of religious liberty and knowledge is ever unfavourable. They raised the cry of *innovation*, *heretical faith*, and the *church in danger!* The arm of the civil magistrate was invoked—abuses were sanctioned—stockings and stonings were connived at—whippings, commitments, and dungeons, were employed! The main spring of malice, and leaven of iniquity, were easily traced to the nominal ministers of the sanctuary: They appeared, as they well might, to your forefathers, not only as intruders upon sacred ground, but often as wolves in sheep's clothing. Thus manifested in their assumed character, they saw the priests as objects of religious aversion; and they were unquestionably right, in judging by their fruits, that they were men “whom the Lord had not sent;” men, who had no Christian right to assume the sacred character of Gospel minister

ministers; men, who had no Christian right to emoluments of office, which Christ had not instituted, but which the divine genius of his institutions was utterly against!

Under these impressions, they thought themselves not only warranted in exposing, and testifying against the surreptitious character of beneficed and hireling ministers in the Christian church; but conceived themselves sanctioned in refusing to pay, from their houses and lands, any quota towards the support of such men. This idea of resistance soon became generally prevalent, and seems to have been received as a very early principle of conduct among your first friends. Without laying any particular stress upon the fact, it seems to have originated in the fervent and pious, though illogical and illiterate mind, of your publick ancestor, *George Fox*: a man, whom only to name, is, at the same time, to recall the memory of whatever has been pure, devout, and disinterested, in the *intentions* of human nature! The contemporaries in his faith and labour, I have no doubt, were men of his own genuine stamp, and worthy of our venerable esteem. You cannot have a more lively regard for their character, than has the writer of these pages. I contemplate them, for the testimony of conscience, frequent and faithful in perils, prisons, and death! Their memory, I consider, as now embalmed, better than with the odour of "myrrh, aloes, and cassia," in the general repository of departed excellence!—But this belief does not necessarily imply that, respecting their idea of distinguishing tithes, in the way they did, from other unchristian incumbrances, they were correct and right. Their conception was radical with regard to the assumed character and pretensions of priests: and had the emolument claimed, originated

nated with the parties then claiming,—had it been the effect of any arbitrary power or ascendancy, which they and their contemporaries, independently of the laws of the land, had gained over the minds and purses of the people, the refusal would have been clearly within the moral competence of every individual to exercise, to the fullest extent. But such, it is important to consider, was *not* the case; and for reasons which I shall take the liberty briefly to state.

I have in substance joined, and am ready to join in principle with you, that the imposition of tithes, or any other means of maintenance for a set of men, appointed, or to be appointed, by human authority, to teach a particular set of dogmas, doctrines, creeds, and ceremonies, as the true Catholic or Christian faith, is altogether unwarranted in primitive christianity, and totally repugnant to the freedom of the Christian religion. I have no scruple in affirming my belief, that tithes, so imposed, should be considered as an anti-christian yoke upon civil and religious society: that any government, so imposing or confirming such a yoke, acts with a high degree of political error: that such a government, in a professed Christian country, acts with a still higher degree of inconsistency with the nature of Christ's religion—consequently I can have no difficulty in believing, most sincerely with you, that in this country the existence of a tithe system is an unwarrantable grievance.

But when we bring tithes to the test of Christian purity, condemn them by the simple standard of truth and righteousness which our Lord set up,—and maintain that, because so condemnable, they are at all events, and under all present circumstances, to be resisted *in toto*; we act partially,

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and inconsistently, unless we advert to the purity and righteousness of his laws in all other publick matters, and square our conduct by the same rule. This I state as a general principle, without an adherence to which we cannot lay a valid claim to consistency of religious character.

Nothing can be more clear than that the vital spirit of christianity is totally repugnant to *evil provocation, revenge, violence*, and the *military murder of armed hosts!* But these are practised in professed Christian countries with as much promptitude, as though they were the real duties of the Christian religion! I know you lament, in much heaviness of soul, this miserable defection from the true dignity of men and Christians! Could universal love and peace be established by your prayers, or your sufferings, I know you would rejoice "with joy unspeakable." But the time of this perfection in society is not yet come!—and though the enormities in question could not be carried on without the contributions of the people,—I do not say that under the general precept of "submission to the powers that be," (because *the power, or general principle, of government, is ordained of God*) you or I are warranted in refusing to be taxed, among other objects, for purposes of war!

You seem to have agreed, and I will not controvert the general principle, that in matters of government, however inclusive of taxation for war, you are to be active in your submission. But I must, and do, most seriously contend, that uniformly and actively to comply with demands of this nature, *known to be stained through and through with blood;* and yet to excommunicate your own members, for paying *tithe-demands*, in obedience only to the laws of the same government,

government,—is a dilemma of inconsistency, from which the power of *reason* cannot deliver you! You will perhaps reply, or think you can effectually reply, that *revelation*, and not human *reason*, is the higher, and the authoritative source, from which you draw your distinctions. I would gladly find you supported (for I wish all credit to be on your side) in this high appeal. But let us examine the general conduct of Jesus, respecting these matters. Did he *prohibit* the existence of tithes, as a source of ministerial maintenance in his church? No; but he shewed, by example and precept, how his religion might be taught without any temporal emoluments—and thus left us an example that we should follow his steps. Did he *prohibit* the raising and use of offensive or defensive armies? No; but he taught the doctrine of love, forbearance, suffering, forgiveness of injuries; and shewed how mankind, by loving one another, by overcoming evil with good, and doing to others in all things as they would be done unto, were bound to preclude the use of swords and destructive weapons! Thus he made clear the civil duties of all who would be his disciples. He did not *expressly* prohibit temporal emoluments in matters of religion—not because he did not foresee that such an inroad was in danger of being made upon the simplicity of his sacred ministry—for this must have been clearly known to him:—He did not *expressly* prohibit the sanguinary contentions of earthly powers; not because he did not foreknow that they would be in danger of so violating the divine morality of his sacred doctrines—for this likewise was completely known to him:—but in the contemplation and foreknowledge of all human error and obduracy, he laid down this general doctrine—"Wo unto the world, because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but

"wo

"wo to that man by whom the offence cometh." This was said, not merely respecting the man who should betray him to death, though it be considered by some as applicable to that sinful event; but it was evidently a general principle, in a few memorable and solemn words, applicable to the publick offences of men in all generations—a principle harmonizing with the simplicity and purity of the divine government, to the end of the world.

I believe with you, that the perversion of the Christian simplicity in the article of a tithe-supported ministry, is an offence—and that to those concerned in the origin and continued legal imposition of that perversion, is applicable a just proportion of the "wo," by which "the offence cometh." The degree of the "wo," applicable to this, among the numberless impositions and "offences" which take place in the affairs of men in society, we cannot, and it is not in our province, fully to comprehend. Infinite wisdom alone is equal to it; and as that wisdom exists in union with infinite power, purity, and mercy, we are sure that universal and perfect retribution will be finally made! Neither we, of this generation, can be answerable, nor could your ancestors have been answerable, for the *offence* of the imposition in question; it was settled by national authority, long before we or they existed: and it is not in our power or province, as peaceable Christians, to controul the laws, or annul by resistance the statutes respecting the divisions of property.—They must remain, as they have been settled and transmitted, till in the order of Providence, which governs all events, they become reformed by common consent; or till a power of *subjugating* reform arise, which you, consistently with your peaceable principles, can have no pretensions to organize.

I know

I know it is a favourite, and I doubt not a sincere, opinion, of many of your members, that your refusal to pay tithes, and your active conduct in carrying away the whole titheable produce of your lands, as wholly your own property, whenever you have opportunity so to do, is a length to which you ought to go, in dereliction of the authority of an erroneous institution: and that by such conduct you are discharging a kind of Christian duty; which, aided by your consequent prosecution and suffering, will have a gradual influence towards the rectification of national error, in the tithe-establishment. On the other hand, you profess to believe, that the *different*, and as you term it "unfaithful conduct" of some of your brethren, who act on a uniform principle of submission, is an impediment to the progress of reformation. But, however satisfactory your conduct may be to yourselves, and however flattering may be your expectation of the success of it, be assured, for the fact is certain, that not one reflecting man in a thousand, of other religious persuasions, thinks you warranted, on the principles of *common justice*, in urging your "testimony against tithes," by the mode, and to the extent, which your society has adopted, as of Christian obligation. The abolition of tithes, whenever it shall happen, will be effected by other means than those which you exert, on the plea of conscience, against the legal claimant. In the publick mind, so far as you stand acquitted at all for such conduct, it is on the ground of erroneous *prejudice*, and erroneous *zeal*.

In the recent instance of the imprisonment of several of your members in York Castle, their honest *zeal* might be allowed, and doubtless was admitted, by most candid persons, who think favourably of the general simplicity and integrity

integrity of your society. But I have no difficulty in declaring my belief, that very few indeed could acquit the sufferers of *erroneous prejudice*. Their adversary, however, was far more the object of general censure, and most deservedly so;—for his conduct was in the very spirit of persecution. The legislature, long before he existed, had, in tenderness to your supposed sincerity, provided the easy means, by justice's warrant, whereby he might have been satisfied in his legal demands; and in so doing, had tacitly prescribed his mode of procedure. He chose the most severe, unchristian, and oppressive line of conduct—and justly rendered himself the object of general indignation. The unwarrantable, unrelenting severity of this priest—his arrogation of merit, instead of taking shame to himself—and his meanness in publicly cringing for a reward of his iniquity, cannot be too much reprobated by the honest part of mankind.

The question respecting the non-payment of tithes, as it stands between you and the publick, has been fully discussed, at different times, by different, and by some disinterested writers. In a *postscript* to a former pamphlet on Church Discipline, I, as one of the latter class, have given my opinion. It would therefore be the less necessary for me, in this place, to enter at any considerable length into the subject, were such a discussion a main part of my object. Most of your own writers have appeared to confine themselves chiefly to censuring the conduct of clerical *receivers*, and the hardships your society has suffered, from the unchristian spirit of those receivers. For such a complaint, we know there has been too much cause. But your most able, and eminent writer, Anthony Pearson, may be considered

as having early comprised, in his book, whatever could have the nature of argument, either on the erroneous origin of tithes, or your adopted mode of testifying against them.—What has been said on those topics by your lesser writers, among whom Joseph Phipps is chiefly distinguishable, might perhaps have been better omitted,—for what Anthony Pearson could not do, was not reasonably to be expected from an inferior pen. But the *two* well-intended, though ineffectual, attempts, of our deceased respectable friend, to refute the arguments of the aforesaid *postscript*, may be considered as furnishing a strong proof of the difficulty.

Anthony Pearson has fully shewn, and exposed to general disapprobation, the error of a tithe-establishment, in a professed Christian church; the blindness and superstition of the first promoters of it; and the fulminating craft and hypocrisy of regal and priestly power, by which a general division of the value and produce of lands became effected; by which a tenth, or a nominal tenth, was set apart, in a way most unwise, unworthy, and perplexing; and by which provision was made for perpetuating a class of men, who, as such, would be a standing obstacle to the Christian system; and who, from the worldly motives by which very many of them would of course be actuated, must furnish a standing contrast to a genuine Christian ministry!—All this he fully and forcibly did; and in so doing, he marked out the ground of a rational dissent from a church so founded; of an abandonment of her communion; and of those strong testimonies, and remonstrances to government, against her burthensome mode of support, which, if honestly persevered in, may be ultimately successful.—But Anthony Pearson has not shewn how, on any principle short of *resistance against the laws*

laws of the land, and an invasion of the *legal* rights of other men, any individual subject, be his religious opinions what they will, can insist on taking, as his own, the whole produce of titheable lands!—However unwise, corrupt, and anti-christian, we may deem the means by which the *appropriation* in question became accomplished, the fact is, that it *was* accomplished. Usurped authority, excited by the crafty luxurious arrogance and hypocrisy of popish priests, might lead the way; but general agreement, however blind and blameable, brought up the rear:—The different interests were progressively admitted and settled, on one general and mutually acknowledged principle—the publick good, of so providing for teachers of religion: and the guarantee of performance had become a part of the law of the land, long before the existence of your society. For such a state of things your society could not have been accountable. Its lot of existence was cast after the lapse of many ages of those perversions. You found the divided tenure of land, and the divided value of land-produce, transmitted down through a succession of consenting owners and occupiers, however superstitious and deluded; and in numerous instances, *lands*, which had been wholly devoted to church uses, and the tithes of others, had been transferred, by gift or sale, to *lay* proprietors, without any idea of future clerical service whatever;—but all this arrangement, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, all this disarrangement, was standing fully authorized, and confirmed by the law of the land!—Whoever, therefore, among your ancestors, *inherited* a titheable estate in land, inherited it just in that state of *divided* interest, which his predecessor held it in, and in no other; whatever known taxation, or drawback, existed upon it, as the legal claim of a priest or a layman, was so far forth a legal deduction of value;

value; and whatever that deduction left, was precisely all that such inheritor could take and appropriate as his own.

Whoever, among your ancestors, *purchased*, or *rented* land, took it, as every man must do now, under all the circumstances of taxation, and mode of taxation, which the law had attached to possession before his contract. Consequently, whatever the operation of that law did not take away, to the use of another, was, strictly speaking, the contractor's own interest and property in that land, or its produce; but he could be the owner of nothing more. He could not have the power of owning or cultivating at all, but under the title which the law of the land, such as it was, both in its general principle and particular provisions, gave him:—and that law put him into possession of his fields, as a taxed and incumbered property, estimated and valued as such immediately from the period at which the incumbrance was fixed. As a *renter*, he might indeed take an estate in land by special agreement with the landlord, so as to be wholly exempted from a tithe-claim; but then the landlord must have previously compounded with the tithe-claimant, and the renter must pay a higher rent in proportion to the expence of the discharge, and in effect be still a *tithe-payer*.—The *mode*, only, would be altered—the *burden* would remain, and be positively paid for.—If no such special agreement take place, and the landlord *simply let* his estate, he lets at a rent clearly understood to be so much the lower, on that account; estimating by some general rule of inverse proportion to the weight of the tithe incumbrance.—In all such contracts, your members, in common with other persons, are *volunteers*. If they have religious scruples about paying, or allowing a tithe-claimant what the law defines to be his due, the law does not

compel them to incur the difficulty. They may avoid it, by having nothing to do with the cultivation of land; but if they *will* be renters, and cultivators, or *will* cultivate their own estates, the law defines the taxation which it expects them to submit to and fairly allow. And though the law has been laudably lenient, in providing against a *severity* of penalty upon you, who plead scruple of conscience for non-payment of the tax it levies; it holds you, as it held your ancestors, as much unintitled to retain the tithe of your farms, as you are to refuse the payment of your rents, or your bonds. Such is the general doctrine of the law—and such the general sentiment of common sense! It surely can be nothing short of a kind of implicit veneration for even the weakest opinions of your ancestors, which prevents your general perception of the facts in question. And I cannot think I arrogate too much, or pass any undue reflection on your general good sense, by believing that my arguments on this topic would be satisfactory to you, were the inconsistencies at which they are pointed those of any other people!

An honest and industrious cultivator of land may be an aggrieved and suffering man, by the operation of the law of tithes upon his superior *industry*, or *costly*, *experimental modes of exerting it*; and this has often happened, to the injury of the general interest, as well as his own; but it is an *accident* of the subject, by no means chargeable on the tithe-claimant, and altering not the ground of his right to receive. It is, however, an accident, which from its nature will be found of increasing weight in this country; and which will have a progressively powerful tendency towards the removal of the burthen of tithes, if they should never be *forcibly* overthrown in the first *reformatory* of a public *convulsion*. Such a termination

mination of tithes, as by the latter mode, would be on a far different principle from that on which you profess to object to them, and on which you hope for their end; and I will do you the justice to say, from my full conviction of the truth, that you would be *behind* the last to attempt an abolition by such means.

Indeed your principles of peaceable submission, and attachment to the civil governments under which you have lived, both before and since the revolution of 1688, have been always remarkable. You have addressed your submission and allegiance to all the successive princes on the throne—and in all civil matters have appeared emulous to be considered as loyal, contributing to the expences of government as far as your professed "testimony against wars and fightings" would possibly allow you to be active. This disposition you particularly evinced, by your voluntary contribution for flannel waistcoats, to the army of the North, while repelling the invasion of 1745. That contribution was well received by government; while it was considered by some persons as bordering on a temporising conduct,—and of late years, as not according with the strictness of your assumed "testimony" against the support of a militia, for a specific provision against invasion, and for home defence.

However equivocal your conduct in these matters may appear; however reconcileable, or otherwise, with the strictness of your testimony against paying a tax, which government had long before settled on your lands, for the support and *clothing* of priests; you never before were called upon for contributions, equally large, definitive, and trying, with those of the present period! The present period seems

to have been reserved by a wise and superintending Providence, for bringing the rectitude of many men, and many measures, to a close and serious test. In this general trial of rectitude and consistency, you are deeply involved. Your ground of action, in comparison with that of some other descriptions of men, is indeed apparently simple and contracted; and much confined within the sphere of your own society. But you have a part of some importance to act: your wisdom and consistency, in the conjuncture, will be of some consequence to your credit in the serious part of the world; and more particularly so, respecting your own internal government, and the "testimonies" you profess to bear.

You are not only called upon, in common with all other occupiers of land, to pay, as may be agreed on, a price for, or to set out and leave the tenth of the produce of such lands, as fixed by the laws of this country, in manner aforesaid; but you are called upon to pay large contributions, not for the *general* purposes of regular and ordinary civil government, but, avowedly, for the specific purpose of carrying on war; and a war, too, which has been, beyond all former example, sanguinary and destructive to the human species!—Tithe demands you hold to be contrary to the spirit of the religion of Christ, inconsistent in their origin, and, as you think, in their tendency, with the simplicity and disinterested love of that religion; and therefore you refuse to pay them. This refusal you ostensibly hold to be your bounden duty, as Christians, notwithstanding all legal authority, and all the interwoven rights of possession and allowance, without which, as has been clearly shewn, you could not have possessed at all.—You expressly advert to errors in the origin, and in the tendency—ground your "testimony" on them, and raise that "testimony" above

all law, and all human obligations. In these partial professions I doubt not the sincerity of *many* among you, whatever I must be allowed to think of their *prejudices*, and their *consistency*.—But if you feel it your duty to refuse a compliance (or as you term it an *active* compliance) with the laws of the land; that you may not be chargeable even with indirectly aiding what you suppose the law of Christ is against, how will you *consistently* pay, with active hands, in common with the abettors of war in general, and of the present most melancholy war in particular, whatever is demanded of you under the head of “the Assessed Taxes,” already imposed, and those others which will doubtless be soon imposed, for the express purpose of continuing *this war*, with increased vigour?

That *war* has been the assigned and real cause, and specific waste, of more than nine-tenths of all the money that has ever been raised by taxation in this country, is too obvious to be denied! and the heads of numerous acts of parliament, passed for raising new taxes in times of war, have sufficiently told you so; but that “the Assessed Taxes,” *now* demanded of you, are *precisely* for the purposes of war, and no other, permit me to transcribe the following words of the title and preamble to the act itself:

“ACT FOR GRANTING TO HIS MAJESTY AN AID
“AND CONTRIBUTION, FOR THE PROSECUTION
“OF THE WAR!” [12th Jan. 1798.]

“MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN!

“*WE* your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal Subjects, the
“Commons of Great-Britain in Parliament assembled, feeling it
“our indispensable Duty, at the present Crisis, to provide effect-
“tually for raising the Supplies, which are requisite to defray
“your Majesty's publick Expences in the Prosecution of the just
“and necessary WAR in which we are engaged,” &c. &c.

Here the object is not of a doubtful nature; but distinctly avowed, clear and unequivocal:—in paying these taxes, who does not see that you yield a direct obedience to a human law, which virtually calls for a suspension of your “testimony against wars and fightings?”

You do, indeed, enjoin your members to refuse an active payment of *militia*-money, when demanded of you as such, in lieu of bearing arms, for home-defence. So far your conduct is consistent with your original scruples, in the matter of tithes; but the much larger demands upon you, *expressly* for the purpose of more offensive, general, and as you well know, of destructive and sanguinary warfare, you comply with, without any *apparent* scruple at all. And *comply you must!* But in this part of the statement, I will not permit the supposition to rest, for a moment, that you *are intentionally* friends, directly or indirectly, to *any* kinds of warfare;—I know the contrary to be the very truth: you mourn, as real Christians, over such misery of human nature!

I know you profess not to make political matters the subjects of your society discussion—or to appreciate the merits, or comparative demerits, of national quarrels, and war policy. You profess to be under the superior government of the Prince of Peace, and to have nothing to do with questions of carnage and destruction. But such questions have now much to do with your pockets, and the exemplification of your principles.

It is not my object, on the present occasion, to enter far into political disquisitions; to attempt to ascertain the degree

gree of error attaching to the rulers of this country; and to those among the people, who sanctioned those rulers, in the commencement, the ominous awful commencement of this war! It is not my business, were it within my power, to state the degrees of jealousy,—of leading, unnecessary alarm,—the pride,—the inveteracy of national prejudice,—and the many wrong influences under which this country may have been drawn into an alliance of hostility, against the people of France;—a people, who, long abused, degraded, ground, and insulted, by the intolerable weight of civil and priestly tyranny, had gradually discovered the dignity of rational freedom, and asserted the rights of citizens!*

* No candid reader, I trust, will impute to me a direct or indirect attempt to vindicate the progressive atrocities, which, from whatever lamented causes they have arisen, have stained and disgraced the French Revolution. They read an awful lesson of the terrible resentment, revenge, and rapine, of which the poor agitated human mind is capable!—But while we feel a natural and religious horror at the progress of so much impiety and violence, we cannot but doubly lament those causes, which have disgraced the activity of our own advocates for order and religion.—We cannot but doubly lament the unhappy spirit of calumny, and slanderous prophecy, into which this country was betrayed (in an early part of the French Revolution) by the empasioned, enthusiastic labours of a man, of the most eccentric character that ever issued from the schools of science and philosophy! A man to whom was literally applicable the once misapplied stricture of a Roman governor,—“Thou art beside thyself, and much learning hath made thee mad.”—A man whose acquisitions of theoretic knowledge, and whose rhapsodical powers of eloquence, were calculated at once to mislead the judgment, weary the attention into disgust, and yet to re-ignite curiosity by new efforts, and delude the common sense, by new enthusiasm and extravagance of declamation!—Wild and sanguine in his conceptions—positive alike in error and in truth, he had the faculty of adorning fiction, till he seemed himself to believe it true, in proportion to the successful splendour of his own meretricious colouring!—To those untimely productions of *Edmund Burke*, this unhappy country seems to have owed much of that malignant electricity, that intemperate flame, which suddenly bursting forth, furiously fed on the fuel of an old inveterate prejudice against the name of Frenchman! The people of that country, once denounced as a nation of atheists, in rebellion against all human rights, and all divine authority, and treated as “the offscouring of all things,” suddenly assumed the desperate character of a nation in arms for vengeance;—and then the demon of general desolation reigned! May this country be ever on her guard against a similar danger!

If this were a fit place to enlarge on such topics, it is now, alas! too late for us availably to deplore past errors!—Too late availably to reflect on the happy preventions of extensive, unparalleled calamity, which a wise and magnanimous neutrality on the part of *this* country (secure in her laws, her loyalty, her situation, and defensive power) might have secured! It is too late for us to indulge in mortifying reflections, on the sanguinary exertions of *other* corrupt and treacherous states, displayed in proportion to the enormous subsidies bestowed on them, and drawn for that purpose from the laborious classes of this nation!

Whatever we may think of such subjects,—of the disdainful manner in which the first solicitations of France, for the neutrality of Britain, *said* to have been accompanied by *proffered pledges* of her peace, were received:—Whatever we may think of the combination of despots on the Continent, to crush down the rising, and *then* temperate, growth of Gallic liberty;—whatever we may think of the tyrannical design, of those powers, evidenced by their coercive invasion of France in the infancy of her internal struggles, and by the barbarous manifestoes of the Duke of Brunswick—manifestoes denouncing destruction to the whole city of Paris, and calculated to madden the multitude into the retaliations of universal rage! Whatever we may think of the subsequent horrible scheme of cutting off from all the women and innocent children,—from the sick, aged and miserable, all foreign supplies of the necessaries of life,—and involving them, if possible, in one general famine! Whatever we must think of the awful aggregate of error, blindness, delusion, tyranny, and carnage, which we have seen,—our only refuge seems to be silence and astonishment!

In

In this state, indeed, we cannot avoid the recurrence of such ideas! We cannot refrain from contemplating the wandering thousands of poor wailing women, who have been made widows! The tens of thousands of pining children, who have been left fatherless! The millions of rash, exasperated, and deluded fellow men, who have been constrained to die, mangled on fields of battle,—to perish in the storms, tempests, and terrors of the ocean;—or who have gasped out the languishing remains of life in situations of fatigue, famine and conflagration; in dungeons, and pestilential climates,—with all their manifold iniquities, augmented on their heads; and who have been wantonly sent to their account before the awful Judge of universal nature! Such unavoidable reflections furnish a spectacle, which, to the Christian mind, is mournful and diabolical, beyond the powers of description!!—Such has been this war!!—A war which we are now called upon expressly to support, and prolong, as a matter of dire necessity—and in the presence, and name too, of that Almighty God, the awful tremendous thunder of whose word, you believe to be utterly against the whole enormity of those dispositions which lead to such a scene!

And yet, such is your situation, that under the general injunction to *submit yourselves to the ordinances of the ruling powers that be*, you cannot refuse to pay the *legal assessments*, without incurring penalties, which you will not consider yourselves as called on to incur! In paying, you will be unable to consider yourselves as doing no more than *morally* “rendering to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.”—No *Roman Cæsar* on earth could have had any *moral* right to the means of exciting and extending unbounded misery and destruction:—And as to the *moral* right of *modern Cæsars*,
every

every man, however unresisting, must think as he can!—In your case,—the whole is a series of implicit *submission*, either with or without a rational construction of general obedience. The dilemma may be painful, and doubtless you have felt it—but you must and will, on the general principle of submission to government, *pay and submit!*—You will, by your own *general* conduct in this matter, preclude, in a large degree, the power of censuring any of your less scrupulous brethren, for complying with the calls of government, in a way of “voluntary contribution,” although to be applied in aid of measures which you must (according to your principles) deem of a nature decidedly anti-christian!

Neither do I see how you can continue your customary censure, and excommunication, of those who, in active obedience, pay the specific demands for raising the *militia*! Any shades of difference which you may attempt to define, in favour of paying the new “assessed taxes,” you will henceforward so attempt, with small satisfaction to yourselves; and in the estimation of other men, the most accustomed to reason correctly on general matters of importance,—your arguments to that point must utterly fail.

Permit me, therefore, briefly to repeat, and urge, for your consideration, what my leading reflections were mainly intended to impress, that, as you must find yourselves involved, in augmented inconsistency, by *now* imposing, on your own members, as you have done, your society laws, relative to tithes; you would wisely relax from that *unnecessary, unhappy*, and I wish I could not truly say, *unchristian* severity: a severity which you cannot, without the most glaring absurdity, continue to prosecute—and which all you have written,

written, or attempted to say, in the style of rational argument, is wholly insufficient to palliate!

The true friends of the Christian religion cannot wish to see you abandon the *rational* part of your "testimony against tithes"—a testimony, which, to a certain extent, must do you honour, and the holy Christian cause a most essential service!—But that testimony, to be Christian—to be most consistent, impressive, and beneficial, must be bounded (as your general testimony against wars and fightings) by a public, and solemn, often proclaimed, but *not contentious* and *persecuting* disapprobation of their existence!—This you may nobly continue to do, by shewing forth *an example* of their non-necessity, in a well-ordered Christian church, edified and instructed by a disinterested, primitive-christian ministry—by public and seasonable appeals to the consciences of the people in general,—and particularly to the ruling "powers that be," for the truth and excellency of such principles, and such practice.—On such open, and truly Christian ground, after the example of Him, who taught, admonished, intreated and wept, for the salvation of men, you may humbly trust that your light will not be lost; but that it will so shine, as, under the supreme government, to become subservient to the great ends of the gospel!

Such a conduct, unaccompanied by internal coercion in matters of the mere economy of your faith, would be attended with at least all the good effects which your present practice can produce; and be abundantly more prevalent in its general influence.—Such a conduct, instead of raising doubts of its moral rectitude, could not fail to attract attention; could not fail to *charm*, by the dignified, primitive

tive simplicity of its spirit; and powerfully tend towards that change in the general mind, which must precede the object of your solicitude, (in which I most heartily join with you) *the ultimate abolition and extermination of tithes!*—This conduct, while it would be extensively and usefully applauded by the wisest and best of men among other societies, would not fail to be productive of an edifying harmony and increase of numbers among yourselves; and under all circumstances, I most seriously submit to you, would be a conduct the most consonant with general rectitude, and with the obvious example of your divine Master.

A day is *fast* approaching, when the passive and peaceable conduct of a Christian society, principled against any dependence on priests, and against the causes and calamities of blood-shed, may be particularly amiable, inviting, and consolatory. That spirit of universal love and peace, which is the salt of the earth, and of the gospel covenant, will soon wear, in this afflicted country, a peculiar beauty,—and become the uniting principle of peculiar favour and solemnity:—for the hour of outward suffering is near! But if you be found divided among yourselves, inconsistent, contentious, and sensorious, respecting matters of opinion, and modes and degrees of faith, about which the weakest and the worst are ever the most busy; your's will not be the peaceable sanctuary in which the weary traveller, seeking the consolations of a better country, can repose himself by the way.

The inconveniencies and real unhappiness which your principles of discipline, in the matter of tithes, have brought upon your society, by the party contentions it occasions; by the

the excommunication (as lately at *Reading*) of otherwise respectable brethren, who have integrity enough to avow their dissent; and by inducing formal profession, and *insincere orthodoxy*, among others, to whom acknowledged membership is an important object; are but too obvious!

[If proofs of such inconveniencies and unhappiness had before been wanting, (which they certainly had not) the instance above alluded to might serve as a notable one to exemplify the truth of these remarks. In that instance, of the contentious and arbitrary proceeding of a very small majority, if majority it may be called, armed by the letter of the society-law,—and that letter strained to the utmost,—we see a decision effected, which cuts off from the body, members at once reputable for their moral character, and general usefulness;—men warmly attached to the substantial religious principles of their fore-fathers, and the natural privileges of their birth-right, as brethren. Several, if not all, of those brethren had uniformly born a testimony against ecclesiastical demands, and frequently suffered (with a desire not to give offence by their own example) restraint of their goods, in manifestation of that testimony: yet because, as their printed case sets forth, they could not consent to the expulsion of some of their friends, for failing to go the lengths which they themselves had gone, they were expelled for that moderation and tenderness! Feelings which at once did honour to them and to the Society! This memorable event, which evinces the integrity and amiable character of the sufferers, records and illustrates an important truth, that a spirit of intolerance increases by habit, and finds no limit but in the extent of its power! An instance of temerity like this, attended with speedy evidence, that such power had been partly assumed and exerted by false pretensions, even to moral rectitude, or moral prudence, among the party concerned,—

cerned,—seems to call, in a peculiar manner, for the Revisal of the Society, as it regards the fitness of things, and its own constitutional power of regulation and redress!]

Few persons, who have been accustomed to set a high value upon particular church communion, and to prize the confidence and benefits which that kind of intercourse is supposed to confer, have sufficient strength of mind willingly to forego them, for the serener feelings of *conscientious* exclusion. Not that it can be easily inferred from excommunication, that any serious man will be unhappy in solitude. There is an unaltered source of happiness, and of qualification for religious and social usefulness, to which such persons may ever have recourse! They do not, as a consequence of separation, lose any of their mental powers, or of their respectability in honourable society. They may continue to to feel themselves equally under the divine acceptance, and benediction! They may experience the salutary tribulations, and penitential atonements, proper for all the children of imperfection, in the *porch* of the spiritual temple; they may have access, in the general society of all who are accepted, to the spiritual, everlasting *altar* of that temple—and, in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, be edified!

I have said, *insincere orthodoxy*, not as meaning, or wishing to reflect on any man, who goes the length of a solemn profession of *conscientious scruple*, however unsupported by Christian precept or analogy. I am not, and far be it from me to wish to be, his judge: every man, under all his motives, must stand or fall to his own master. But strong general appearances are amenable to the conclusions of fair and open reasoning:—and, in imputing *insincerity*, I surely shall

shall not be deemed uncharitable in holding, that where so much obstruction is in the way, to a sound, conscientious conviction of the rectitude of your society orthodoxy, in the manner of shewing your testimony and treating your members, it is next to impossible but that *many must be insincere!*—Insincere, either because they have not seriously sought a rational conviction of the fitness and divine authority of what they profess; or because, having sought it in vain, they have preferred an unsubstantial credit among their brethren, to the genuine satisfaction, upon clear conviction, of their own minds!—Hence the very few among you, who, on being requested to explain the grounds and fruits of their profession in the matter of tithes, can urge any tolerable vindication of the mode of maintaining the society-testimony among yourselves. I mean as to the propriety of endeavouring to withhold from the legal claimant, whether priest or layman, in opposition to the laws as they now stand; as to the fitness of censuring and excommunicating those members of your body, who pay, as they pay war-taxes, in obedience to those laws; and so censuring and excommunicating others, who testify against such internal, petty persecution! Indeed I cannot be surprised at such inability, in your members, and even your writers, to give any satisfactory apology for your practice;—for the task of rendering a fair solution of the difficulties in question, is too hard for *reason*; and the harmonizing of palpable inconsistencies, is not be expected from *revelation*.

In mentioning these various disadvantages of your society-practice, I speak of what I have really seen, known, and lamented, in common with many among you; and which I most earnestly wish to see redressed. From personal considerations,

derations, under the circumstances in which I now write, I have not, neither can I have, any particular or interested views. Those who really know me, will at least give me credit for sincerity in these declarations; and amongst some of those, who may rightly affix the name of the writer to these pages, I shall hope for similar sentiments in my favour. —But, however this may happen, I surely cannot mistake my own views, motives, and feelings. I announce them as sincere towards you,—salute you as brethren, in a near and affectionate relationship; and remain, in a love that is unfeigned,

Your friend and brother,

CATHOLICUS.

FEBRUARY,

1798.

* * This second edition having been unexpectedly called for by some of the author's friends, of whose judgment and goodwill to the Society he had an high opinion, he resolved to give it. The variations from the first edition are small, and the additions few. The author has to apologize to several of his readers, for not complying with their wishes in appointing a bookseller: the Tract was wholly intended as a private Address to the Society of Friends—whom he highly values,—and on whom, therefore, he would strictly guard against drawing publick attention, respecting the principal subject matter.

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